(d) The arrears to Fertilizer Companies are due to non-settlement of equated freight claims with Government of India and non-recovery of the cost of fertilizer supplied to the Cooperative Marketing Societies in Kashmir Valley on account of lack of contact and disturbed conditions.

(e) Subsidy on fertilizers has not been discontinued, at present.

Agricultural growth in Eighth Plan

864. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI:
SHRI SURINDER KUMAR SINGLA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that low priority to agricultural growth has been envisaged in the Eighth Five Year Plan which has already been approved by the N.D.C.;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) the manner in which Government propose to keep the pace of agricultural growth in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. In fact, the public sector outlay on agriculture and allied activities has been raised to 7.4 per cent of total outlay in the Eighth Plan, compared to 5.85 per cent in the Seventh Plan.

(c) The strategy for agricultural development in the Eighth Plan will aim at achieving self-sufficiency in food, generating surpluses of specific agricultural commodities for export, more balanced regional development with greater emphasis on development of eastern and north-eastern region, development of dryland farming, increasing production of oilseeds and pulses, diversification of agriulture and development of hortiulture, fisheries, etc.

Spreading of Indian desert

865. DR. SANJAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a recent study by the Central Arid-Zone Research Institute (CAZRI) has proved that the Indian desert is not spreading to the adjoining States of Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh; and

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI K. C. LENKA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir, The results of the integrated studies conducted by the Central Arid-Zone Research Institute (CAZRI), Jodhpur do not provide any evidence that the desert is spreading towards these States.

Testing of Adulteration in Fertilizers

866. DR. SANJAYA SINH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that MARKFED has extended a free facility for farmers to test adulteration in fertilisers;

(b) if so, the full details in this regard;

(c) whether portable fertilizer testing kits have also been provided by the MARKFED; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN): (a) to (d) MARKFED, Punjab have provided portable fertiliser testing kits to their Soil Testing laboratories. This facility has been offered free of charge to farmers. The Testing Kit developed by the Central Fertilier Quality Control and Training Institute, Faridabad consists of a simple and qualitative check to ascertain whether the fertiliser sample is adulterated or not.